

THE LINK BETWEEN CHILD MALTREATMENT AND JUVENILE CRIME

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Main Questions

- Why does it matter?
- The stereotype – and the reality
- What form does the evidence take?
- Australian data
- Possible pathways? Mechanisms
- The primary role of relationships
- Implications for policy and practice



Starting point – criminal involvement → proportion with child protection background

- NSW DJJ: 28% of male and 39% female **detainees** had a history of being in care*
- 21% of males and 36% of females on **community service orders** had a history of being in care*
- WA women prisoners in 2002
 - 19% of prisoners in care as children

* **Wood Inquiry report** (2008), p. 556 citing DJJ, Justice Health and Uni Sydney key Findings reports



Starting point – child protection background

→ proportion with juvenile justice involvement

- **NSW 1995 data:** 38% male 'wards' and 7.9% female wards aged 10-17 years in Children's Court and JJ assessment
- **Qld data:** 10% of 1983 cohort of all births had **contact** with CP service, and **5%** of those had court appearance for **proven** offence by age 17*



Starting point – child protection background

→ proportion with juvenile justice involvement

- More likely to come to attention of police
 - Homelessness
 - Drug and alcohol related behaviour
 - Survival crimes

- More punitive treatment
 - Lack of accommodation – high and complex needs



Maltreatment Measures

- Reported 'risk of harm' vs substantiated abuse and neglect
- Prevalence vs incidence? Dark figure of unreported maltreatment
- Children and families in receipt of service following child protection [CP] report
 - Family conferencing etc and in-home services
 - Out-of-home care
- Inclusion of all forms of abuse and neglect
 - Emotional abuse and neglect, exposure to DV ?



Juvenile Crime Measures

- **How far into the system?**
 - Formal police caution
 - Appearance before Children's Court
 - Proven offences only
 - Re-offending and progression to adult offending
 - BOCSAR (2005) – 70% of juveniles in subsequent court appearance, within 8 years, and 13% first time appearances in Children's Court → adult prison
- All types of offences – violent, property (status?)
- Self-report or official records



Types of Studies

- Administrative data matching
 - Aggregated eg post-code rates of CP and JJ involvement
 - Individual matching of records in both
- Cross-sectional data
- Longitudinal studies – Aust, NZ, US
- Further refinements – twin studies, children at risk



AUSTRALIAN DATA

Weatherburn & Lind (1997, 2006)

- Based on NSW aggregated admin data
 - NSW DoCS reports for 0-16 yr-olds (1986-1991)
 - Children's Court appearances 10-17 yr-olds (1990-1995)
- Rates per population of children by postcodes
- Measures of social and economic stress
 - Single parent families
 - Poverty
 - Crowded living conditions



AUSTRALIAN DATA

Weatherburn & Lind (1997, 2006)

- Strong direct prediction of juvenile crime rate by **neglect** (and abuse) rate, and
- Weaker indirect relationship between by social and economic stress and crime rate
- Concluded that the effect of structural (stress) variables mediated by child neglect



AUSTRALIAN DATA

Stewart et al. (2002)

- Based on **Qld admin data** – child welfare and proven offences in Children’s Court)
 - Cohort of children born in 1983 in contact with child welfare dept
 - 17% of children **with** 1+ substantiated maltreatment report had later offending record
cf 10% **without** child protection contact
 - 26% of children in out-of-home care
cf 13% not placed



AUSTRALIAN DATA

Stewart et al. (2002)

- Those who later offended more likely to be:
 - Male: 25% (*cf* 11% females)
 - Indigenous: 42% (*cf* 14% non-Indigenous)
 - Notified more often – not nec substantiated
 - Physically abused or neglected (23%) – not child sexual assault or emotional abuse
 - In out-of-home care : 26% (*cf* 13%)



Consistent Findings

Maltreatment significantly associated with and generally **precedes** involvement in criminal activity

Higher risk of criminal involvement for:

- Males more than females
- Children who are reported more often and later
- Indigenous and Minority children / young people strongly over-represented



Does Type of Maltreatment matter?

- Mixed findings
- Strong effect often for neglect but...
- Physical abuse more likely than neglect (Egeland et al, 2002; Grogan-Kaylor et al., 2008 – both US studies)
- Sexual abuse
 - Sleeper effect into adulthood (Smith, Ireland & Thornberry, 2005 – high risk Rochester youth 13+
 - Swanston et al., 2003 – Sydney follow-up
- More recent studies on emotional abuse, DV



Does Timing Matter?

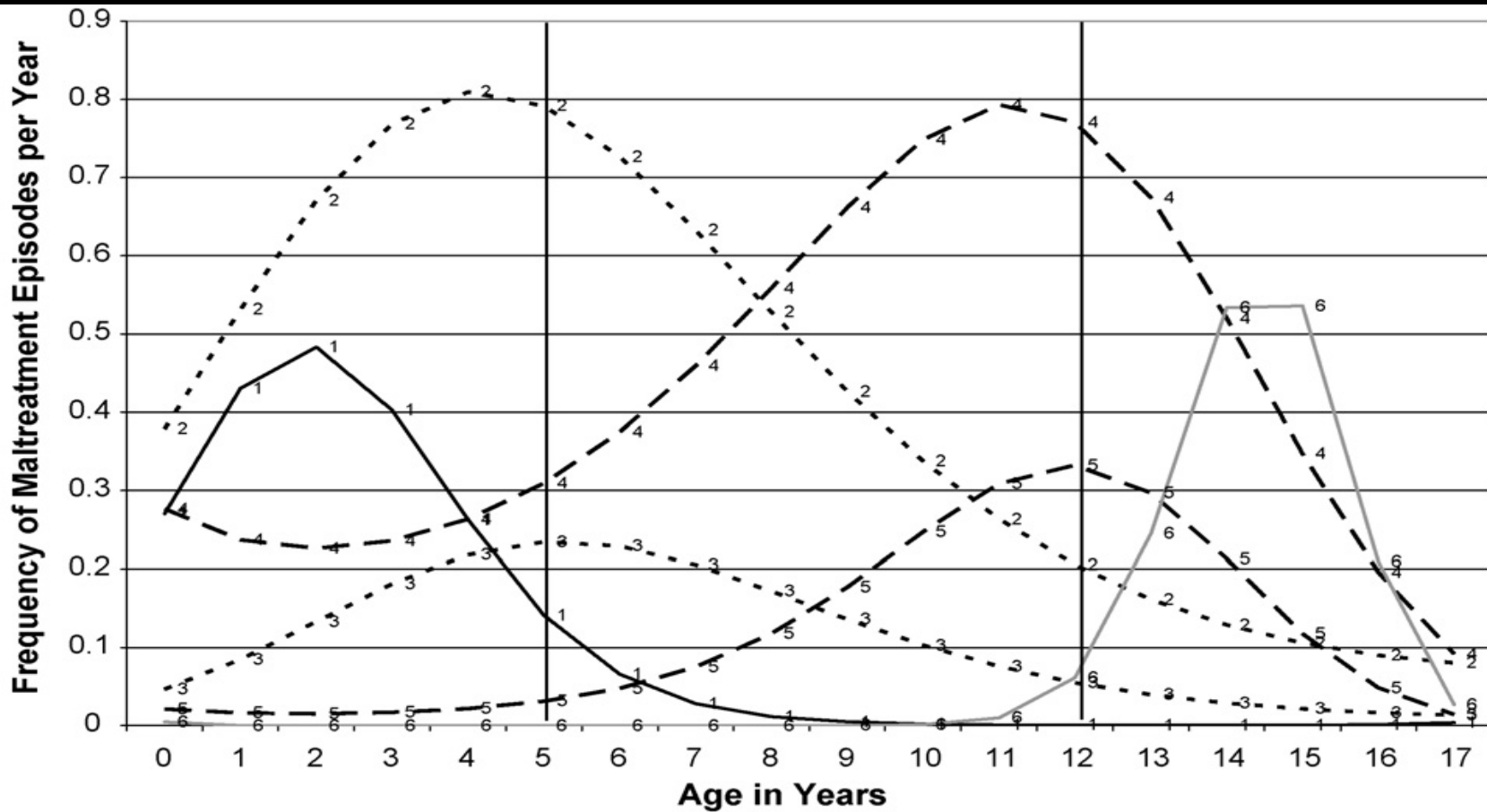
- **Timing / onset and duration**
 - Several recent studies show a higher risk for later offending when maltreatment starts in or extends into adolescence - *cf* child-limited maltreatment
 - Stewart, Dennison & Waterson (2002) - Qld
 - Thornberry, Ireland & Smith (2001) – Rochester
 - Smith, Ireland, & Thornberry (2005) → into adulthood
 - Jonson-Reid & Barth (2000)



Does Timing matter?

- **Transitions – vulnerable periods**
 - Stewart, Livingstone & Dennison (2008) [Qld] identified 6 separate trajectories, 4 of which were critical transition periods:
 - Into primary school
 - From primary to secondary school
- Marked differences in % offending
- **Highest** among secondary school transition / low victimisation (51%)
 - **Lowest** in early childhood group (16.9 %)





- | | |
|---------|--|
| Group 1 | Early Childhood Limited - Acute Victimization (ECL-AV) |
| Group 2 | Primary School Transition- Chronic Victimization (PST-CV) |
| Group 3 | Primary School Transition - Low Victimization (PST-LV) |
| Group 4 | Secondary School Transition - Chronic Victimization (SST-CV) |
| Group 5 | Secondary School Transition- Low Victimization (SST-LV) |
| Group 6 | Adolescent Limited - Acute Victimization (AL-AV) |

Figure 1: Figure 1. Maltreatment trajectories for the six groups
 Stewart, Livingstone & Dennison (2008) p. 57

Does Timing matter?

- **Transitions – vulnerable periods**

→ Marked differences in % offending

Highest among secondary school transition
/ low victimisation (51%)

Lowest in early childhood group (16.9 %)



Other Transitions

- Placement in out-of-home care doubles risk (Stewart et al, 2002; Ryan & Testa, 2005)
 - Esp in adolescence (Ryan et al, 2007)
 - In group homes (Ryan et al, 2008)
- Number of placements / instability in care → higher risk of offending – **behaviour?**
- Multiple changes of school – **behaviour?**
- Family composition and residential mobility



Two case studies

- Recovery for one young man – adult social support following a prolonged period of transient housing and homelessness, involvement in drugs and crime (Matt).
- Less positive story for another young man with similar history.

(Cashmore & Paxman, 2005a, b)



Shane's story

- Shane first notified when he was 2, placed with his aunt when he was 3 and lived there until he was 12.
 - Behaviour problems and suspended from school
 - Series of temporary respite care and refuge placements, attempts to restore him to his mother, his father, his aunt.
 - He became a ward when he was 13, and had several stints in residential care and a detention centre.
- He was discharged at 16 – “nothing more DoCS could do”.
- He did not complete Year 9; series of casual jobs.
- History of homelessness, problematic relationships.
- Mental health and substance abuse problems in and out of detention and adult prison.
- Attempted suicide at least once, and felt no one really loved or cared about him.



Matt's story – Recovery

- Matt became a ward when was 10.
- Many placements and instability in care - foster care, group homes, refuges, extended stays with his Gfa
- After leaving care, cheap rental accommodation, boarding houses, caravans, moved about 16 times.
- Attempted to commit suicide but found and hospitalised.
- Supportive partner - rehabilitation and support from a religious fellowship.
- At 22, Matt had married, happy living with his wife and child in reasonable rental accommodation.



Predictors of doing well in and after care

	Factors	p<
In Care	• No long delay in entry to care	.02
	• No of placements in care	.001
	• Stability in care	.003
	• 'Felt security' in care	.0001
	• Rejection by family / foster carers	.10
	• Fewer problems in care	.001
Leaving care	• Age at leaving care (18 years)	.028
	• Ready to leave care	.003
	• More yrs of schooling before leaving care	.0001
	• Continuity in 'placement' beyond care	.003
After care	• Social and emotional support	.001
	• Availability of financial help	.022
	• Stable accommodation	.001
	• Hopefulness	.008

MULTI-LEVEL MODELS

- Neighbourhood
- Community
- Political and societal
- Global

France & Homel (2006) – societal access routes as distinct from individual trajectories

Goodnow (2006) – available routes, opportunities and options



Importance of Relational Factors

- Relationships esp with parents and caregivers mediate the effects of structural variables
- Trust, feeling loved, cared for – sense of security makes the difference at the individual level
 - Children's perceptions that matter
 - Respect and recognition – having a "voice" *
- Social support – family level
- Social cohesion – community level



Evidence for Relational Factors

- McCord (1983) – high rates of delinquency among children of rejecting parents (50%), neglecting parents (23%) cf loved children (10%)
- Loeber & Stoutham-Loeber (1986) review showed strong links between parental rejection and poor
- Sampson & Laub (1988) Parenting vars mediate structural factors, unemployment etc



Policy Implications

- Importance of intervention **early in life**
 - Child-limited maltreatment → less risk of juvenile offending – and hardwiring of brain re stress
- Importance of intervention **early in pathway**
 - High risk of chronic maltreatment or onset in adolescence → offending
 - **BUT** relatively little focus on adolescents in child protection
 - Need for mental health services / evidence-base re MST for high/complex needs



Policy Implications

- Likely effect of:
 - Sharp increase in reporting of maltreatment / risk of harm over this decade?
 - Doubling of children in out-of-home care over last decade – approx 30,000
 - Continuing/worsening of over-representation of Aboriginal children
 - Concern re lack of foster and kinship carers



Human and economic costs

- .. Assuming other factors remain unchanged, an increase of 1000 additional neglected children would result in 256 juveniles involved in crime. ..
 - An increase of 1000 additional poor families would result in 141 juveniles involved in crime. ..[Weatherburn & Lind, 1997]
- Need for overall response - for both child protection and crime prevention [Wood Report]



Individual and Neighbourhood Factors

Researchers interested in neighbourhood influences have generally not adequately measured **individual and family influences**, just as researchers interested in individual and family influences have generally not adequately measured **neighbourhood influences**” (Farrington, 1993). [p. 30]

